
INTRODUCTION

THE VALLEY OF MIREBALAIS

THE TRAVELER comes suddenly on the valley of Mirebalais, as the road from the capital turns the shoulder of a hill. Long and narrow, the plain stretches before him with its many tones of green. Ahead is the village from which the valley takes its name, its metal roofs aglow in the sunlight, or reflecting the gray sky of the rainy season. Here and there appears a yellow, muddy slash made by the Artibonite River, while framing the valley are the mountains, rising one behind another as they complete its encirclement.

This first glimpse of the country gives no hint of a numerous population. It is as though this valley, like so many other things in Haiti, had set out to belie its own reality and, in this impression, at the very outset to point the lesson that the observer must seek well beneath the surface if he is to attain any understanding of the country and its people. For just as the unsettled appearance of this Haitian valley conceals numerous habitations, cultivated fields, and hard-working inhabitants, so the frenzy of Haitian religious rites is but a gloss upon disciplined ceremonialism, and the relatively placid everyday existence of the Haitian peasant but a mask behind which is waged a spiritual conflict that is his heritage from the dual sources of his traditions.

The commune of Mirebalais is situated in the heart of central Haiti. Lying some thirty-five miles from Port-au-Prince,

4 LIFE IN A HAITIAN VALLEY

101 both town and district are bisected by the main route be-
36 | tween the capitals of the Haitian and the Dominican repub-
[491] lics. Yet, once again, this geographical nearness but distorts
the psychological distance between Mirebalais and the me-
[494] tropolis. For though the busses, converted from camions, pass
to and from the coastal city several times a week, the valley
and even the town which is its center drowse in essential isolation.
A few hundred yards off the main road find the Haitian
peasant following the mode of life of his forebears, oblivious
of events outside the valley. Only for a few of the *notables* of
the town, the *gros nègres*, who have personal, political, or business
contacts with Port-au-Prince, is the comparative proximity
to the capital meaningful.

174 It is not possible to say how long this valley has been inhabited.
Certainly the early Indians roamed there; and there, as in other parts
of the island of Hispaniola, the tragedy of their extinction under the
brutality of early Spanish rule must have taken place. Moreau de St. Mery,
175 to whom all students of Haiti must acknowledge a debt of gratitude for his
103 painstakingly accurate reports of life on the island, gives the derivation
of its name.

"Mirebalais received its name," he says, "because of the enormous numbers of wild animals the first Frenchmen found there, which recalled to them the small district in the region of Poitou [in France], called Mirebalais, where some of them had probably first seen the light of day. These quadrupeds, first introduced by the Spaniards, had no difficulty in multiplying there after the Indians had disappeared from their native land and the Spaniards, reduced in numbers, were obliged to abandon the great plains, so that horses, cattle, etc. came to exercise exclusive domain."¹

175 St. Mery's work, which traces the development of Mirebalais as one of the parishes of pre-Revolutionary Haiti, makes it

195
[669] important point in the warfare between the northern Empire
[31] of Christophe and the southern Republic of Pétion is well
known, since the boundary between the two, never definitely
fixed, might be roughly considered as the Artibonite, control
of which, as always, depended on also obtaining control of the
strategic hills about the town.¹¹ It is not possible to discover
[162] more than approximate figures for the population of Mire-
balais at the present time, since no census of the district has
been made, and the most recent figure of 51,000 for the com-
mune is derived from the baptismal records in the parish
church.¹²

• 361 From the earliest years of settlement of the valley, the town
[632] has been the center of its life. The government of the com-
mune is located here; here the courts sit; and here the best
schools and the only church of the district are found. Yet it
[363] is a small town, numbering less than two hundred and fifty
houses, and crossed by but three principal thoroughfares
stretching north and south, with ten or twelve cross-lanes.

361 The houses on the principal streets, rectangular and small,
342 are built of wood, plastered over with clay, painted, and
roofed with sheet iron. On the outskirts of the town the roof-
ing is of straw, or banana-leaf thatch, while the walls them-
selves are made of twilled wythes. No house lacks its veranda,
however small, where people may be seen sitting late of an
afternoon and early in the evening, but the life of the
women is lived chiefly in the courtyards behind these houses
that line the streets, where the cookhouses are found and the
storehouses, and where all work is done. The place, or town
square, lies at the point where the principal route between
Port-au-Prince and the Dominican border turns sharply to

[697] the east. Consisting of an acre or two of cleared land, it is over-
grown with weeds except when, in preparing for festive occa-
sions, the prisoners from the town jail may be seen spending
long hours, machetes in hand, cutting the grass, a few blades
at a time. North of the square stands the church, a substan-

THE VALLEY OF MIREBALAIS

9

North of the square stands the church, a substantial structure with rounded arches in the Roman style, roofed over, like most other buildings, with galvanized iron. Other public buildings are the town hall — the Mairie — and the "Hall of Justice"; near by are the stone walls of a public building begun some years ago as a school, but destined apparently to house what is known as the "Bureau of Contributions," a euphemism for the tax-collector's quarters. Despite the fact that Mirebalais was one of the most difficult regions for the American occupation to subdue during the Caco uprising of 1918-20,¹¹ it was one of the first districts where the Garde d'Haiti was completely Haitianized, and from which all American Marine officers were withdrawn. Only a small detachment is stationed there at present. Its well-kept barracks are near the church, and the prisons form a part of the same compound, from whence issue daily the striped-suited prisoners, men and women, under guard or alone on parole, who do communal work in the town and the near-by countryside.

The town awakens at dawn to the chattering of domesticated guinea-fowl and the crowing of cocks. Occasionally a camion rumbles through the principal thoroughfare; more rarely an automobile dashes by in great clouds of dust on its way to Las Cahobas, or Hinche, or Santo Domingo City. If it is a market day, the streets are early filled with country folk on their way to dispose of their produce, and the clatter from the market place behind the church is heard everywhere until the heat of the day brings a lull to all commerce, and drowsiness once more settles over everything. By mid-afternoon during the planting season, drums can be heard over the countryside. The sounds are not those of the "throbbing" vodun drums — though they have more than once been mistaken for them by travelers — but they set the rhythm for the communal work of the *combites*, which perform co-operative agricultural labor. As the rapid dusk follows the disappearance of the sun behind the mountains, the voices of

361
344
346

175
648
625

625
689
342
292

366
461
512
476

512



361 ●
363

MIREBALAIS

ABOVE, A street.

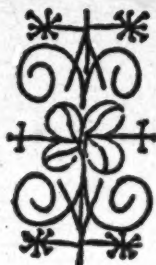
BELOW, The place and the church.



346

[facing P.10]

[P. 1]



1. The Making of the Haitian

If you come to Haiti by sea, a way that is old-fashioned but full of magic, you are first aware of the island as a range of hills rising out of the water, and then, as you sail closer, new ranges come into view behind the first, and eventually you see that everything is mountains. The ranges pile up in the distance and finally lose themselves in the white morning mists that the country people call "snow." A Haitian proverb says, "Behind the mountains are mountains," and that is a true picture of the island.

In the summer after the rains have come, the hills and mountain slopes are green; but later they turn brown, and it is then that one notices the deep gashes where the earth has eroded and washed away into the valleys below and into the sea.

From the top of the range called La Selle ("The Saddle"), when the heavy mists form and settle across the highland valleys one sees nothing but the great rounded sugar-loaf peaks, which appear as floating islands in a vast sea of white.

From a distant ship in the Caribbean in the full glare of daylight it is hard to imagine that millions of people have made a home of these mountains. But at night it is different. The mountains are alive then with twinkling spots of light made by cooking fires, torches, and electric bulbs. For the hillsides as well as the coastal lowlands are dotted with tiny huts and homesteads, and the trails from one village to another crisscross and lie on the land like a woven net. They lead from the high-up places down to the seacoast towns, through the waterless mesa of the frontier, through the pine forests of the southern range, through dense blankets of wild strawberries, wild-bamboo groves, and plantations of coffee. They find their way to the salt marches, the rice fields of the Artibonite Valley, and the cities.

In the lowlands the days are hot and tropical. It is there the sugar cane, bananas, and plantains grow so lushly. In the mountains the people have

Land and Work 115

For many Haitians, the struggle to obtain a piece of ground and to hold onto it is the very heart of the struggle for existence. On Morne l'Hôpital in 1932 I knew a man who owned ten acres of gardens. He had it planted in bananas and plantains, yams, and cotton. He had two cows and a calf and a grove of mango trees and coconut palms. His house was clean, tidy, and by Haitian standards well furnished. Eighteen years later he had less than an acre of land, no trees, no cotton, and no cattle. His family had become impoverished. He had three grown children and virtually no land to leave to them except that on which the house stood. His troubles began with a lawsuit over his land title. He sold his cattle to raise money to pay his court expenses. He lost half of his land as a result of the lawsuit, most of it the part with the good trees. Later, he sold more land to raise "eating money," and then rented it from the new owner. He could not grow enough cash crops to pay the rent and was finally evicted. Today he has not enough ground left on which to grow food for himself and his wife the year round.

The diminution of adequate landholdings has resulted in the disappearances of many of the *lacours* (hamlets) that were a familiar sight a few decades ago. Young people traditionally built their houses near the family homesteads until there were five, six, or a dozen houses in a group. There was a natural family community which shared a common social life and the work of the fields. But as the population increased and the landholdings shrank, young people and old began to move away in search of new land, or work in the cities. Often where the *lacour* remains it is only as a settlement of landless house renters who work where they may for wages.

Economic refugees from rural areas seek wage work in the cities, returning to their original homes only on special festive days for family reunions. The men find employment as gardeners, servants, construction laborers, and stevedores. Some find work on the sugar and sisal plantations, others in craft industries making straw hats, baskets, shoes, chairs, and mahogany ware for export. The struggle in the big city of Port-au-Prince is for many of them worse than the poverty they left behind. There are the inevitable slums and the constant threat of hunger. It is in the big city that one hears most often the words *moin grand gout* (I am hungry), and least often the words *Bondieu bon* (God is good).

The land hunger increases, and the overflow of the mountain settlements continues to move cityward. In former years there was a trend toward emigration across the eastern border into the Dominican Republic, which has a population density roughly one third or one fourth that of Haiti. This trend was checked, temporarily at least, in 1937 by

INTRODUCTION

xxv

That the separateness of yeomanry and elite had visible and sociologically important expression in physical type in Haiti was a clear consequence of the history of that country. But the traditional preponderant light skins at the top of the structure and the preponderant darkness at its base are less important than the domination of the total structure, and of the institutional means for changing it, by a mere fraction of the national population. It is the power of the elite which has mattered through time; its physical appearance has been only a historically derived expression of that power. Such a balance of politically weak masses against numerically sparse power holders is common, perhaps particularly in the "less developed world"; but each such case has certain special characteristics. Haiti's special nature is not simply in its being a yeoman country, and one in which a small group dominates the mass. As a rural, agrarian, unindustrialized, politically sovereign, and quasi-capitalistic country, Haiti shares much with other lands; but in each regard its own particularity needs to be assessed.

565
563
664
642

[181]
[171]

The rurality of Haiti is extreme, not simply because there are no concentrations of population in excess of 25,000 except for Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haïtien but also because towns of intermediate size are few in number, and the urban concentrations in the country's two cities are substantially of relatively recent rural origin. Port-au-Prince dominates the Republic in all of its economic, political, and social activities. Furthermore, the rural towns have been losing to the capital, not gaining from it. Until the United States occupation, the larger towns of the coast, such as Jérémie, Jacmel, and St. Marc, were united economically with each other, and to some extent with the capital, by a lively coastwise shipping system, and the inland towns were tributary to those of the coast. The growth of inland transport during the occupation strengthened the interior towns while coastwise shipping declined, but the capital grew even more important as the sole economic center of the Republic. Since the 1940s, the rapid deterioration of the road system has left both inland and coastal towns enfeebled; only Port-au-Prince has remained strong.

361
369
489

The dominion of Port-au-Prince is firm, and there is no focus of power in the countryside that can counteract it. Those few foreign enterprises in Haiti that base themselves outside the capital city use local port facilities (e.g. Miragoâne for Reynolds Aluminum, Cap-Haïtien for the sisal plantations of the north) and do not affect the development of the interior transport.

369
473
504
489

THE HAITIAN PEOPLE

175
669 ex-slave, each of whom aroused his own group to fight off the invading Spaniards and English.

These two men emerging from the maelstrom were the cultured colored general, Rigaud, and the powerful Negro, Toussaint. United in purpose in 1793, they soon began to oppose each other. Their dissent foreshadowed the rift which was permanently to divide free Haiti.

175
159
669 Rigaud, born at Les Cayes in 1761,¹⁴ had been brought up in Bordeaux, France, where he was taught the trade of a goldsmith. Like many other colored colonial youths, he went briefly to Georgia to fight on the side of the Americans in their revolution against England. Gifted with extraordinary military talent, he rose to prominence in Saint-Domingue following the slave insurrection, and played a major part in expelling the British from the colony. He was fiery, intellectual, and brilliant, but lacking in self-control and political subtlety, which put him at a disadvantage with Toussaint. Rigaud's admirers—almost the whole body of free colored people—included all the influential persons in the colony once the whites had been cowed or driven out; the South was devoted to him body and soul, and he had numerous partisans in the provinces of the North and West. But Toussaint was the idol of the half-million blacks.

Born a slave, Toussaint was fortunate in having a kindly master who permitted him the sort of work which gave him leisure for reading. He studied eagerly, devouring all accounts he could find of the military exploits of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar. Apparently he took no part in the slave uprising; on the contrary, he helped his master escape to the United States and later regularly provided him with money. Then he himself went to the Spanish part of the island, where he made a military reputation in the Spanish colonial army. When General Laveaux sought his aid against the invaders of harassed Saint-Domingue, the ex-slave accepted his overtures. Detractors of Toussaint call him a "cunning hypocrite" for joining and then deserting the Spaniards, and for accepting high rank under a French general whom he was even then (so it is asserted) planning to supersede. His decision to return to Saint-Domingue was certainly crucial, for it began his meteoric ascent

[648] to power.

Accompanied by the black troops he had captained in the Spanish

14. Les Cayes, the third largest town in modern Haiti, was even in colonial times an important seaport. It is located on the southwestern peninsula.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 1804-1843

33

people: "If ever you refuse, or grumblingly accept, the laws which the genius guarding your destinies dictates to me for your happiness, you will merit the fate of ungrateful people. But perish that hideous idea!" There can be little doubt that he wished Haiti under his direction to become prosperous; but it is likewise clear that he was personally self-centred and inordinately grasping.

Each step Dessalines took to further his ambitions either for Haitian prosperity or for his own fortunes had its bearing upon the development of social classes in the country. Extermination of all remaining whites was one of the first tasks he set himself. On a promise of clemency he lured several hundred gullible French out of hiding, and butchered them in cold blood. His campaign of extirpation was methodical and thorough. To try to penetrate into the psychological background of this violence is to desert fact for speculation: it may have been a desire for revenge on the French, pure and simple; it may have been gloating sadism; he may have wished to warn France against any future attempts to regain possession of the country; or he may have wanted to notify his subjects of his intention to rule with severe discipline. Certainly this last aim was achieved, if any of his people did not already know, after two years of warfare, the extent of his ruthlessness. He ruled by fear and by threats, never by the cultivation of loyalties.

Apparently he was afraid that Napoleon would renew his efforts to subdue the former colony. To forestall such an attempt he ordered each of his governing subalterns to construct one great fort on the most prominent hill in their district—a scheme which led immediately to the institution of forced labor. He likewise devised a plan, not actually put into effect, for destroying all towns and plantations near the coast and moving the capital to an inland village; and so isolating Haitians from all contact with the outside world.

Turning to domestic policy, he faced a herculean task. The warfare of 1802-3 had left the country in chaos. Plantations and agricultural projects were almost totally ruined. All habits of steady industry had been lost. Dread of a possible new attack by the French made necessary a great army, and this in turn removed most able-bodied men from productive labor in the fields, while the construction of fortresses still further depleted the labor supply. The first census of free Haiti, in 1805 (probably not highly accurate), showed only 380,000 people, with the women outnumbering men by almost three to

two.

175
642
643175
643
456
712
361175
643
433
701
464
712
175
162

THE FORMATIVE YEARS, 1804-1843

37

tion! Here again, the decision of a leader fixed the direction of Haitian life for decades to come. It is agreed by commentators that overmilitarization was the bane of nineteenth-century Haiti. One tenth of all able-bodied men were constantly in active army service. Moreover, all the male cultivators on plantations must hold themselves in readiness to obey the government's call to arms; ammunition and arms were stored in every parish. A military mentality was nourished, the people early learning the lesson (apparently unchallenged by any liberal) that the army should rule and the people obey.

Although the common soldiers were ex-slaves who, upon dismissal from service, would return to the ranks of agricultural workers, their officers had a higher status. Noncommissioned officers had a long road to travel to eminence, but like the overseers they had at least a glimpse of the promised land of distinction. Captains and generals had this vision within their grasp: they were already of the élite.

In the subcategory of "artisans" were included all the townspeople who carried on crafts or trades. It must be remembered that Haiti had no cities, and that its two largest towns then numbered probably no more than 10,000 people each, so that artisans were not numerous. Since there was a distinction in the arduousness of various pursuits as well as in their financial return there existed in this category, as in the official and military, some chance for social prestige.

The only persons remaining outside the categories mentioned were colored landowners who had held estates in the colonial period. Dessalines took active steps to gain control of most of the land in the country, but at his death in 1806 there were still many of the old proprietors left who were, in the main, determined to hold their land and preserve their dignity as non-laborers.

Assassination by his political foes ended the career of Dessalines only two years after he assumed power. In 1805 he had had himself crowned emperor in imitation of Napoleon, but unlike Napoleon he permitted no nobility. "*Moi seul, je suis noble!*" he replied to ambitious henchmen who asked for the establishment of a peerage. It was the Emperor's tactless handling of the social situation which caused his murder, for he touched sensitive nerves on the raw in attacking property rights, inherited privilege, color distinctions, and social aspirations. The cultivators grudgingly accepted his decrees; the ambitious upper group did not.

The former *affranchis* fully intended to keep their lands once the

175
701
[162]

[181]

175
463
361175
471
423
425175
643

THE HAITIAN PEOPLE

631
[361] Overlapping these military arrondissements have been financial arrondissements, generally six in number. The capital of each of these was a port, with a customs house: Port-au-Prince and Jacmel in the West, Les Cayes and Jérémie in the South, Cap-Haïtien in the North, and Gonaïves in the Artibonite.

Finally there were the five *départements*. These seem never to have been much more than geographical divisions to which it was convenient occasionally to refer. In more recent years, as records have been kept with more accuracy, the departments have developed important clerical significance.

[162]

<i>Département</i>	<i>Capital</i>	<i>Estimated Population (1930)</i>
North	Cap-Haïtien	450,000
Northwest	Port-de-Paix	150,000
Artibonite	Gonaïves	475,000
West	Port-au-Prince	950,000
South	Les Cayes	650,000

According to the present constitution, the country still has its five administrative departments, but has increased its other political subdivisions. There are 27 arrondissements to attend to governmental details, and in addition, 10 prefectures overlapping the arrondissements and serving as units of police control. The arrondissements are still further subdivided into 94 communes, 43 military posts, and 551 rural sections. Each commune is administered by a communal magistrate, appointed by the secretary of the interior, and so subordinate to the central government. This magistrate is assisted by a communal council or a municipal council, composed of elected prominent citizens.²

692
693 Courts have existed only in the important towns, which since Boyer's presidency have varied in number from four to eight. Each of these courts has consisted of a president or *doyen*, four judges, four substitute judges, a commissioner appointed by the president of the republic to keep watch over the proceedings of the body, and various inferior clerks and secretaries. Judges are politically appointed, either by the president of the republic or by his cabinet. Civil cases which exceed fifty dollars in extent have been handled by these courts, as also all appeals from decisions of local *juges de paix*. To the judges were added in 1826 juries to assist in criminal cases

693
695 2. See Luc Dorville, *Géographie-Atlas* (Port-au-Prince, 1939), *passim*.

COMMERCE

251

policy of encouraging trade with his friends and prohibiting it with his enemies—both arbitrarily. The variation of Pétion was a sort of mercantilism, with set high tariffs.

What Dessalines planned was in terms of Western statecraft so weird that white onlookers felt they were restrained in calling Dessalines a transplanted African tribal chieftain. So passionately intense was the fury of that general against all whites that he took every precaution he could devise to prevent face-to-face dealings between his Haitians and foreigners. By deceit, treachery, and ingenious cruelty he conducted a massacre which deserves comparison with that of Saint Bartholomew: this effectively rid the country of white residents. Since for a time Haiti would have to depend for economic survival upon trade with foreigners, Dessalines next conceived a project whereby the whole population would be gathered in the centre of the island, in the most protected valleys and the gorges of the highest mountains. In these fastnesses the people would never see a white but would work on the land, producing sugar and coffee and cotton for export without ever leaving their local habitations. On the seacoast would be established certain "counters" over which a few incorruptible Haitians, chosen by the Emperor himself, would sell local products and buy the necessary imported goods. Impregnable fortresses were to guard access to the interior, which would be reached by new roads from the seacoast "counters." Every seaport was to be destroyed as soon as new towns could be built in the back country. Already when his death intervened Dessalines had moved his capital from the Cape (that is, Cap-Haïtien, formerly Cap Français) to the inland village of Marchand (in the department of the Artibonite; now renamed Dessalines), and his next plan was to transfer Port-au-Prince eight leagues inland to the plantation Dérance, among the mountains.

Dessalines has been thought absurd, childish, barbaric. But there is something poignant, even tragic, in this fiery determination of the black chieftain, bitter over the cruelties and indignity to which his people had been subject for decades, to use this alien island as best he could and preserve his people at any cost from such another domination.

Despite his scheme for ultimate isolation of the people, Dessalines kept everyone steadily at work by the forced-labor system instituted

a. See p. 247 and note 13. under Toussaint.

175
439175
177
643
655
466
439[166]
[24][712]
[491]
[504]
[361]175
466

OUTER ASPECTS OF HAITI

291

105 to regard the people as neighbors, their first impression is generally
13 their abiding one.

13 And yet the land has its memorable beauties. To lie at anchor in the harbor at Port-au-Prince early in the morning and watch the long arm of the southern peninsula turn gradually from purple vagueness to brilliant green as the sun rises back of the capital; to see a tiny ship with its patched and colored sail glide quietly by on its way out to the island of La Gonâve, lying twenty miles to the west, like a morsel about to be swallowed by the open jaws of the "mainland"; to hear the morning noises drifting across the water, with a snatch of song or laughter in the air; to watch Port-au-Prince come to life, white and sparkling as the sun strikes it—this is the proper introduction to Haiti. Beyond the capital are the hills and mountains; if one will take the time, he may look back as he climbs and see not only the whiteness of the city, but the gracious sweep of the harbor, and the peninsula losing itself in the western distance. He will think without apology of a lesser Naples, and will not miss Vesuvius. Within the country is every variety of scenery: high mountains whose peaks are frequently shrouded in misty clouds; ranges of lower mountains ("morne" is the eloquent Haitian name for them) which can be melancholy, kindly, or forbidding, as the spirit of the traveler wills; dull wastes of salt marshes; arid deserts where cactus grows, spiked and hairy, to enormous heights; canyons, waterfalls, dried-up streams; moors, little jungles, farms; rich plantations of sugar cane, dusty stretches of sheer barrenness—everything, in fact, from majesty to complete insipidity. Rarely can one find such utter diversity in a small space as in Haiti. One might fancy himself successively on Egdon Heath, in an Arizona desert, among the Dakota Bad Lands, in old Saint-Domingue, in tropical Africa, in the Pyrenees.

● 361 The sad truth remains: nothing that man has done in Haiti for a
[342] century and a quarter has been worthy of the landscape. A few government buildings in Port-au-Prince are passable, and the city as a whole is not a blemish; yet not to have seen it is to have missed no great aesthetic experience. Elsewhere the towns and villages run the gamut from monotonous small-scale structures to mere collections of shanties. Great gashes have been cut in the forests by generations of earth-hungry peasants who needed farms. Much of the land looks poor; indeed, thousands of once fertile acres are now beyond any use at all, grown up in cactus, because of overuse and misuse for-

OUTER ASPECTS OF HAITI

295

439 mind dust, ruts, and a steady succession of bumps. To travel in the average hired car, driven by a Haitian, is one of the grim experiences of life. The driver speeds as if pursued by a demon, while the peasant pedestrians leap for safety into the ditches; the unfortunate passenger is moved to close his eyes to avoid seeing the inevitable crash which does not come. The most comfortable means of travel if one is going only to towns is by ship, for practically all of Haiti's towns are seaports.

162 To know the towns is still not to know Haiti, however, for two million or more Haitians live in the rural regions. These are the people. And if they are ignorant and not too clean, they are nevertheless models of kindly generosity. It is the proud boast even of the élite that one may travel the length and breadth of the land in perfect safety, in no danger of life or of personal property.

105 Many homely sights linger in the mind: women washing the family clothes in the stream, laughing and gossiping with their neighbors; men and women talking in animated fashion to themselves, arguing, cajoling, explaining as they walk along; individuals carrying a single flower, simply because it is beautiful; barefoot women, gnarled of hand and lined of face, kneeling in the Catholic church at prayer; taxi drivers who cruise by, hissing in order to attract the attention of a visitor who obviously can afford to ride instead of walk; an apparently ceaseless procession of patient donkeys, always laden, sometimes ridden by women, sometimes urged along from behind; the so-called buses each with its witty or its florid name (Plaisance, Éclair, Grâce-à-Dieu, Polichinelle, Sauve-qui-peut, Montparnasse), which like glorified buckboards jostle woodenly from the town to country hamlets; the winsome, open smile and gay laughter of a peasant boy; the ingratiating charm of a sleeping baby in the noise of the market place. To know the average Haitian is to feel a warm affection for him. His life is never easy, yet he bears it all with true beauty of spirit. If *le bon Dieu* sends distress, he will also make it possible for distress to be borne.

576 The people are polite, whether to each other or to strangers. A younger person greets an older one as *compère* or *commère*—literally, godfather or godmother; to his equal he says "*frère*" or "*m'sieu*."

[367] Sometimes one sees a local patriarch instructing little children in "deportment." This courtesy extends to hospitality: a stranger is [609] almost sure to be offered shelter and food wherever he stops.